

The struggle of Bobby Sands and the other IRA hunger strikers are important lessons for us all. The state will try to criminalize our movements for liberation and our actions in defense of our principles but we must never allow it to equate revolutionary activities with those of economic or anti-social crimes.

While we can not agree totally with the positions of the IRA or the struggle in which they are embroiled, we can recognize the efforts that they have taken against British imperialism and the sacrifices they have made for their ideals.

The struggle of the Irish people for their liberation is a long and vibrant history of revolt against an unjust system. In publishing this pamphlet we hope to illuminate a personal side of this struggle as experienced by one who, for a time, was at its center. Also, this diary represents a chronicle of prison resistance, something we in the U.S. can refer to as incarceration rates soar and the prison population increases. It is resistance, by political as well as "social" prisoners, to the penal and "criminal justice" systems that we must foster in our own struggle for liberation from the state and capitalism.

Raze the Walls!
march 1997

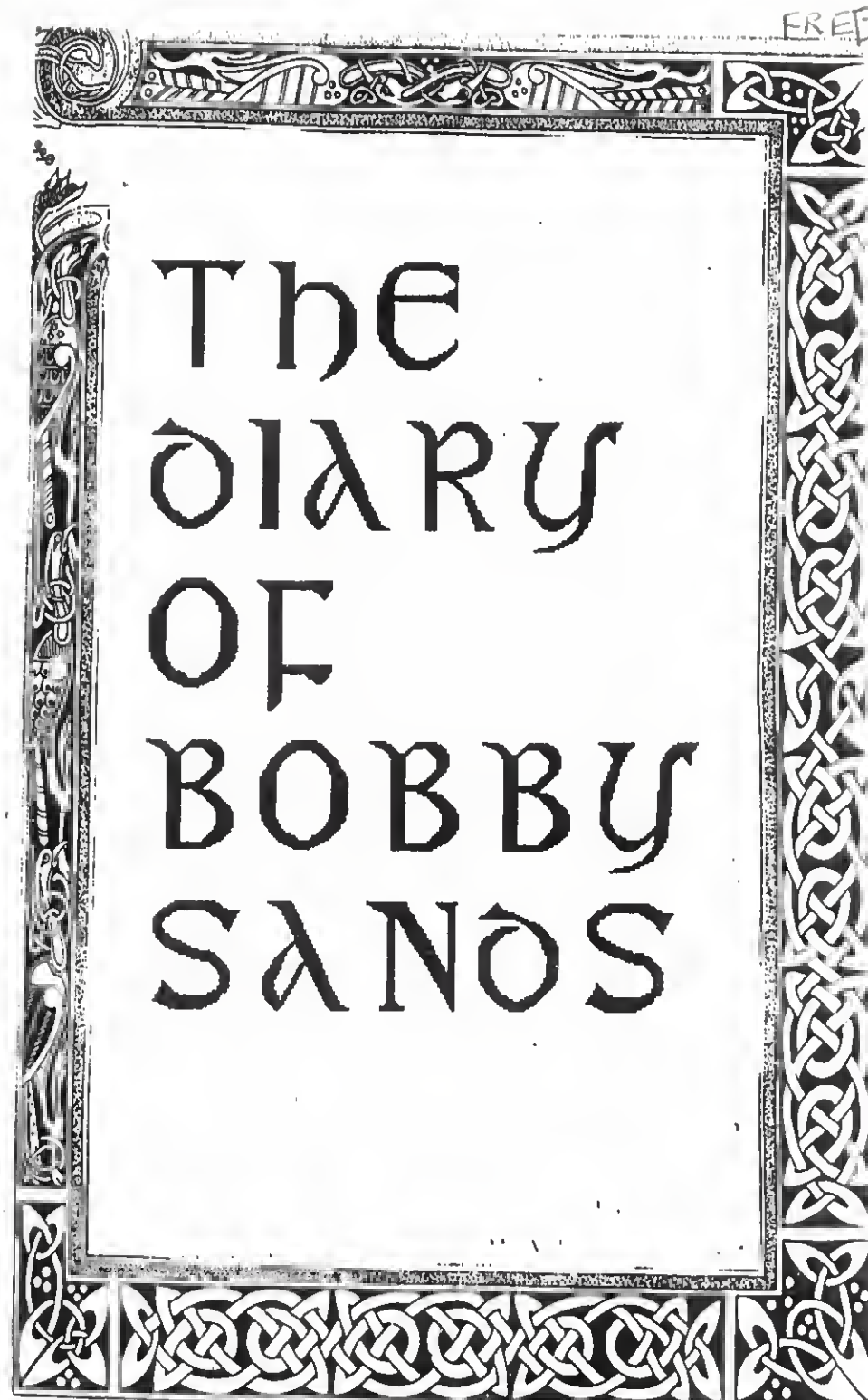
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Who Was Bobby Sands?

On March 1, 1981 Bobby Sands initiated a hunger strike on behalf of Irish Republican Army (IRA) prisoners of war interred in British prisons. This action was taken in protest of the elimination of the special status of IRA prisoners, previously guaranteeing them certain rights under the auspices of the Geneva Convention as legitimate P.O.W.s.

Sands' protest was joined by many of his imprisoned comrades in an attempt to force the British government to concede to the IRA's demands that P.O.W. status be re-instituted for all IRA prisoners. By revoking this status, the British government was in effect equating resistance to its imperialist system with common criminal activity and denying its implicit political nature. The IRA hunger strikers took the ultimate step to regain this right and to legitimize the struggle of their nation for its independence.

During the course of this strike Bobby Sands was nominated and elected as MP (or representative) to Parliament in a campaign run by Sinn Féin, the IRA's political party. It was hoped that this election of Sands to Parliament would gain support for the strikers' demands. Unfortunately the publicity and support it drew was not enough and Sands was allowed to die with no attempt made to settle the demands of the strikers.

Eventually, ten IRA hunger strikers died before the strike was called off. Negotiations failed to produce the desired concessions from the Thatcher government, although most demands were soon met with unofficial changes in policy. No public concessions in regards to the struggles of the IRA or its political prisoners and P.O.W.'s were ever made.

(continued on back cover)

The Diary of Bobby Sands

The orderlies were giving our food to all who were returning from Mass. They tried to give me a plate of food. It was put in front of my face but I continued on my way as though nobody was there.

I got a couple of papers today, and as a kind of change the Irish News was there. I'm getting any news from the boys anyway.

I saw one of the doctors this morning, an ill-mannered sort. It tries me. My weight was 57.70 kgs. I had no complaints.

An official was in with me and gave me some lip. He said, 'I see you're reading a short book. It's a good thing it isn't a long one for you won't finish it.'

That's the sort of people they are. Curse them! I don't care. It's been a long day.

I was thinking today about the hunger-strike. People say a lot about the body, but don't trust it. I consider that there is a kind of fight indeed. Firstly the body doesn't accept the lack of food, and it suffers from the temptation of food, and from other aspects which gnaw at it perpetually.

The body fights back sure enough, but at the end of the day everything returns to the primary consideration, that is, the mind. The mind is the most important.

But then where does this proper mentality stem from? Perhaps from one's desire for freedom. It isn't certain that that's where it comes from.

If they aren't able to destroy the desire for freedom, they won't break you. They won't break me because the desire for freedom, and the freedom of the Irish people, is in my heart. The day will dawn when all the people of Ireland will have the desire for freedom to show.

It is then we'll see the rising of the moon.

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Sunday 1st

I am standing on the threshold of another trembling world. May God have mercy on my soul.

My heart is very sore because I know that I have broken my poor mother's heart, and my home is struck with unbearable anxiety. But I have considered all the arguments and tried every means to avoid what has become the unavoidable: it has been forced upon me and my comrades by four-and-a-half years of stark inhumanity.

I am a political prisoner. I am a political prisoner because I am a casualty of a perennial war that is being fought between the oppressed Irish people and an alien, oppressive, unwanted regime that refuses to withdraw from our land.

I believe and stand by the God-given right of the Irish nation to sovereign independence, and the right of any Irishman or woman to assert this right in armed revolution. That is why I am incarcerated, naked and tortured.

Foremost in my tortured mind is the thought that there can never be peace in Ireland until the foreign, oppressive British presence is removed, leaving all the Irish people as a unit to control their own affairs and determine their own destinies as a sovereign people, free in mind and body, separate and distinct physically, culturally and economically.

I believe I am but another of those wretched Irishmen born of a risen generation with a deeply rooted and unquenchable desire for freedom. I am dying not just to attempt to end the barbarity of H-Block, or to gain the rightful recognition of a political prisoner, but primarily because what is lost in here is lost for the Republic and those wretched oppressed whom I am deeply proud to know as the 'risen people'.

There is no sensation today, no novelty that October 27th brought. (The starting date of the original seven man hunger-strike) The usual Screws were not working. The slobbers and would-be despots no doubt will be back again tomorrow, bright and early.

I wrote some more notes to the girls in Armagh today. There is so

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much I would like to say about them, about their courage, determination and unquenchable spirit of resistance. They are to be what Countess Markievicz, Anne Devlin, Mary Ann McCracken, Marie MacSwiney, Betsy Gray, and those other Irish heroines are to us all. And, of course, I think of Ann Parker, Laura Crawford, Rosemary Bleakeley, and I'm ashamed to say I cannot remember all their sacred names.

Mass was solemn, the lads as ever brilliant. I ate the statutory weekly bit of fruit last night. As fate had it, it was an orange, and the final irony, it was bitter. The food is being left at the door. My portions, as expected, are quite larger than usual, or those which my cell-mate Malachy is getting.

Monday 2nd

Much to the distaste of the Screws we ended the no-wash protest this morning. We moved to 'B' wing, which was allegedly clean.

We have shown considerable tolerance today. Men are being searched coming back from the toilet. At one point men were waiting three hours to get out to the toilet, and only four or five got washed, which typifies the eagerness of the Screws to have us off the no-wash. There is a lot of petty vindictiveness from them.

I saw the doctor and I'm 64 kgs. I've no problems.

The priest, Fr John Murphy, was in tonight. We had a short talk. I heard that my mother spoke at a parade in Belfast yesterday and that Marcella cried. It gave me heart. I'm not worried about the numbers of the crowds. I was very annoyed last night when I heard Bishop Daly's statement (issued on Sunday, condemning the hunger-strike). Again he is applying his double set of moral standards. He seems to forget that the people who murdered those innocent Irishmen on Derry's Bloody Sunday are still as ever among us; and he knows perhaps better than anyone what has and is taking place in H-Block.

He understands why men are being tortured here the reason for criminalisation. What makes it so disgusting, I believe, is that he agrees with that underlying reason. Only once has he spoken out, of the beatings and inhumanity that are commonplace in H-Block.

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raibh aon ghear´ n agam.

Bh´ oifigeach isteach liom agus thug s´ beag´ de b´ il domhsa. Arsa s´ 'chinn go bhfuil t´ ag l´ightheadh leabhar gairid. Rud maith nach leabhar fada ´ mar n´ chlochn´ idh t´.

Sin an saghas daoine ar´ iontu. Ploid orthu. Is cuma liom. L´ fad´lach ab ea ´. Bh´ m´ ag smaoineamh inni´ ar an ch´alach´ seo. Deireann daoine a l´ faoin chorp ach n´ chuireann mui´ n sa chorp ar bith. Measaim ceart go leor go bhfuil saghas troda.

An dt´ n´ ghlacann leis an chorp an easpaill bith, is fulaing´onn s´ ´ chath´ bith, is greithe airithe eile a bh´onn ag s´orchlipheadh an choirp. Troideann an corp ar ais ceart go leor, ach deireadh an lae, t´ann ach an rud ar ais chuig an phr´omhrud, is ´ sin an mheabhair.

Is ´ an mheabhair an rud is t´bhachta´. Mura bhfuil meabhair l´idir agat chun cur in aghaidh le ach an rud, n´ mhairfidh. N´ bheadh aon sprid troda agat. Is ansin cen ´it as a dtigeann an mheabhair cheart seo. Bf´idir as an fhonn saoirse.

N´ h´ cinnte gurb ´ an ´it as a dtigeann s´. Mura bhfuil siad in inmhe an fonn saoirse a scriosadh, n´ bheadh siad in inmhe t´ f´in a bhriseadh. N´ bhrisfidh siad m´ mar t´ an fonn saoirse, agus saoirse mhuintir na hEireann i mo chro´. Tiofaidh l´igin nuair a bheith an fonn saoirse seo le taispe´int ag daoine go l´ir na hEireann ansin tch´ na geala´.

(Translated, this reads as follows:)

St Patrick's Day today and, as usual, nothing noticeable. I was at Mass, my hair cut shorter and much better also. I didn't know the priest who said Mass.

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Why! Because they aren't being paid for it!

I'm continually wrapped up in blankets, but find it hard to keep my feet warm. It doesn't help my body temperature, drinking pints of cold water. I'm still able to take the salt and five or six pints of water per day without too much discomfort.

The books that are available to me are trash. I'm going to ask for a dictionary tomorrow. I'd just sit and flick through that and learn, much more preferable to reading rubbish.

The English rag newspapers I barely read, perhaps flick through them and hope that no one opens the door. A copy of last week's APRN was smuggled in and was read out last night (ingenuity of POW's again). I enjoyed listening to its contents (faultless - get off them! - good lad Danny (Morrison)). I truly hope that the people read, take in and understand at least some of the truths that are to be regularly found in it. I see Paddy Devlin is at his usual tricks, and won't come out and support the prisoners...

Well, that's it for tonight. I must go. Oíiacute;che Mhaith.

Tuesday 17th

P´draig inniú 's mar is gn´ch níor th´rla aon rud suntasach, bhí m´ ar aifreann agus mo chuid gruaige gearrtha agam níos gaire, agus ´ i bhfad níos fearr freisin. Sagart nach raibh ar mo aithne abhí ag r´ ran aifreann.

Bhí na giollaí ag tabhairt an bhia amach do cl.´ch abhí ag teacht ar ais ´n aifreann. Rinneadh iarracht chun tabhairt pl´ta bidh domhsa. Cuireadh ´s c´mhair m'aghaidh ach shiúl m´ ar mo shlí mar is nach raibh aon dulne ann.

Fuair m´cúpla nuacht´n inniú agus mar shaghas malairt bhí an Nuacht na hEireann ann. T´im ag f´il p´ an sc´al at´le f´il ´na buachaillí cib´ ar bith.

Choniac m´ ceann dona dochtúirí ar maid-un agus ´ gan b´asaí Cuireann s´ tuirse ormsa. Bhí mo chuid meachain 57.50 kgs. Ní

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I once read an editorial, in late '78, following the then Archbishop O Fiaich's 'sewer pipes of Calcutta' statement. It said it was to the everlasting shame of the Irish people that the archbishop had to, and I paraphrase, stir the moral conscience of the people on the H-Block issue. A lot of time has passed since then, a lot of torture, in fact the following year was the worst we experienced.

Now I wonder who will stir the Cardinal's moral conscience...

Bear witness to both right and wrong, stand up and speak out. But don't we know that what has to be said is 'political', and it's not that these people don't want to become involved in politics, it's simply that their politics are different, that is, British.

My dear friend Tomboy's father died today. I was terribly annoyed, and it has upset me.

I received several notes from my family and friends. I have only read the one from my mother — it was what I needed. She has regained her fighting spirit I am happy now.

My old friend Seanna (Walsh, a fellow blanket man) has also written.

I have an idea for a poem, perhaps tomorrow I will try to put it together.

Every time I feel down I think of Armagh, and James Connolly. They can never take those thoughts away from me.

Tuesday 3rd

I'm feeling exceptionally well today. (It's only the third day, I know, but all the same I'm feeling great.) I had a visit this morning with two reporters, David Beresford of The Guardian and Brendan O Cathaoir of The Irish Times. Couldn't quite get my flow of thoughts together. I could have said more in a better fashion.

63 kgs today, so what?

A priest was in. Feel he's weighing me up psychologically for a later date. If I'm wrong I'm sorry but I think he is. So I tried to defuse any notion of that tonight. I think he may have taken the point. But whether he accepts it, will be seen. He could not defend my onslaught on Bishop

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Daly or at least he did not try.

I wrote some notes to my mother and to Mary Doyle in Armagh; and will write more tomorrow. The boys are now all washed. But I didn't get washed today. They were still trying to get men their first wash.

I smoked some 'bog-rolled blows' today, the luxury of the Block!

They put a table in my cell and are now placing my food on it in front of my eyes. I honestly couldn't give a damn if they placed it on my knee. They still keep asking me silly questions like, 'Are you still not eating?'

I never got started on my poem today, but I'll maybe do it tomorrow. The trouble is I now have more ideas.

Got papers and a book today. The book was Kipling's Short Stories with an introduction of some length by W. Somerset Maugham. I took an instant dislike to the latter on reading his comment on the Irish people during Kipling's prime as a writer: 'It is true that the Irish were making a nuisance of themselves.' Damned too bad, I thought, and bigger the pity it wasn't a bigger nuisance! Kipling I know of, and his Ulster connection. I'll read his stories tomorrow.

Ag ráacute; an phaidíacute;n faoi dhóacute; iachan láacute; itáacute; na buachaillíacute; anois. Níacute; iáon rud eile agam inocht. Sin sin.

(Translated this reads as follows: The boys are now saying the rosary twice every day. I have nothing else tonight. That's all.)

Wednesday 4th

Fr Murphy was in tonight. I have not felt too bad today, although I notice the energy beginning to drain. But it is quite early yet. I got showered today and had my hair cut, which made me feel quite good. Ten years younger, the boys joke, but I feel twenty years older, the inevitable consequence of eight years of torture and imprisonment.

I am abrcast with the news and view with utter disgust and anger the Reagan/Thatcher plot. It seems quite clear that they intend to counteract Russian expansionism with imperialist expansionism, to protect their vital interests they say.

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I have a visit tomorrow and it will be good to see my family. I am also looking forward to the walk in the fresh air, it will tire me out, but I hope the weather is good. I must go.

Monday 16th

I had a wonderful visit today with my mother, father and Marcella. Wonderful, considering the circumstances and the strain which indeed they are surely under.

As I expected, I received a lot of verbal flak from Screws going and coming from the actual visit. Their warped sense of humour was evident in their childish taunts, etcetera.

I wrapped myself up well to keep me from the cold. My weight is 58.25 kgs today, but I burnt up more energy today with the visit. I've no complaints of any nature.

I've noticed the orderlies are substituting slices of bread for bits of cake, etcetera — stealing the sweet things (which are rare anyway) for themselves. I don't know whether it's a case of 'How low can you get?' or 'Well, could you blame them?' But they take their choice and fill of the food always, so it's the former.

They left my supper in tonight when the priest (Fr Murphy) was in. There were two bites out of the small doughy bun. I ask you!

I got the Sunday World newspaper; papers have been scarce for the past few days.

There is a certain Screw here who has taken it upon himself to harass me to the very end and in a very vindictive childish manner. It does not worry me, the harassment, but his attitude aggravates me occasionally. It is one thing to torture, but quite a different thing to exact enjoyment from it, that's his type.

There was no mirror search going out to visits today — a pleasant change. Apparently, with the ending of the no-wash protest, the mercenary Screws have lost all their mercenary bonuses, etcetera, notwithstanding that they are also losing overtime and so on. So, not to be outdone, they aren't going to carry out the mirror search any more, and its accompanying brutality, degradation, humiliation, etcetera.

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Republican Movement contact on the outside), I just thought I'd take this opportunity tonight of saying to your good hard-working self that I admire you all out there and the unselfish work that you all do and have done in the past, not just for the H-Blocks and Armagh, but for the struggle in general.

I have always taken a lesson from something that was told me by a sound man, that is, that everyone, Republican or otherwise, has his own particular part to play. No part is too great or too small, no one is too old or too young to do something.

There is that much to be done that no select or small portion of people can do, only the greater mass of the Irish nation will ensure the achievement of the Socialist Republic, and that can only be done by hard work and sacrifice.

So, mo chara, for what it's worth, I would like to thank you all for what you have done and I hope many others follow your example, and I'm deeply proud to have known you all and prouder still to call you comrades and friends.

On a closing note, I've noticed the Screws have been really slamming the cell doors today, in particular my own. Perhaps a good indication of the mentality of these people, always vindictive, always full of hate. I'm glad to say that I am not like that.

Well, I must go to rest up as I found it tiring trying to comb my hair today after a bath.

So venceremos, beidh bua againn eigin la eigin. Sealadaigh abu.

(Translated, this reads as follows:)

So venceremos, we will be victorious someday. Up the Provos.

Sunday 15th

Frank has now joined me on the hunger-strike. I saw the boys at Mass today which I enjoyed. Fr Toner said Mass.

Again it was a pretty boring day. I had a bit of trouble to get slopped out tonight and to get water.

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What they mean is they covet other nations' resources. They want to steal what they haven't got and to do so (as the future may unfortunately prove) they will murder oppressed people and deny them their sovereignty as nations. No doubt Mr Haughey will toe the line in Ireland when Thatcher so demands.

Noticed a rarity today: jam with the tea, and by the way the Screws are glaring at the food. They seem more in need of it than my good self.

Thursday 5th

The Welfare sent for me today to inform me of my father being taken ill to hospital. Tried to get me to crawl for a special visit with my family. I was distressed about my father's illness but relieved that he has been released from hospital. No matter what, I must continue.

I had a threatening toothache today which worried me, but it is gone now.

I've read Atkins' statement in the Commons, Mar dheacute;!
(Atkins pledged that the British government would not budge an inch on its intransigent position.) It does not annoy me because my mind was prepared for such things and I know I can expect more of such, right to the bitter end.

I came across some verse in Kipling's short stories; the extracts of verses before the stories are quite good. The one that I thought very good went like this:

The earth gave up her dead that tide,

Into our camp he came,

And said his say, and went his way,

And left our hearts aflame.

Keep tally on the gun butt score,

The vengeance we must take,

When God shall bring full reckoning,

For our dead comrade's sake.

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I hope not,' said I to myself. But that hope was not even a hope, but a mere figure of speech. I have hope, indeed. All men must have hope and never lose heart. But my hope lies in the ultimate victory for my poor people. Is there any hope greater than that?

I'm saying prayers crawler! (and a last minute one, some would say). But I believe in God, and I'll be presumptuous and say he and I are getting on well this weather.

I can ignore the presence of food staring me straight in the face all the time. But I have this desire for brown wholemeal bread, butter, Dutch cheese and honey. Ha! It is not damaging me, because, I think, 'Well, human food can never keep a man alive forever,' and I console myself with the fact that I'll get a great feed up above (if I'm worthy).

But then I'm struck by this awful thought that they don't eat food up there. But if there's something better than brown wholemeal bread, cheese and honey, etcetera, then it can't be bad.

The March winds are getting angry tonight, which reminds me that I'm twenty-seven on Monday. I must go, the road is just beginning, and tomorrow is another day. I am now 62 kgs and, in general, mentally and physically, I feel very good.

Friday 6th

There was no priest in last night or tonight. They stopped me from seeing my solicitor tonight, as another part of the isolation process, which, as time goes by, they will ruthlessly implement. I expect they may move me sooner than expected to an empty wing. I will be sorry to leave the boys, but I know the road is a hard one and everything must be conquered.

I have felt the loss of energy twice today, and I am feeling slightly weak.

They (the Screws) are unembarrassed by the enormous amount of food they are putting into the cell and I know they have every bean and chip counted or weighed. The damned fools don't realise that the doctor does tests for traces of any food eaten. Regardless, I have no intention of sampling their tempting morsels.

I am sleeping well at night so far, as I avoid sleeping during the day. I

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(Translated, this reads as follows:)

The birds were singing today. One of the boys threw bread out of the window. At least somebody was eating!

I was lonely for a while this evening, listening to the crows caw as they returned home. Should I hear the beautiful lark, she would rent my heart. Now, as I write, the odd curlew mournfully calls as they fly over. I like the birds.

Well, I must leave off, for if I write more about the birds my tears will fall and my thoughts return to the days of my youth.

They were the days, and gone forever now. But I enjoyed them. They are in my heart — good night, now.

Saturday 14th

Again, another uneventful somewhat boring day. My weight is 58.25 kgs, and no medical complaints. I read the papers, which are full of trash.

Tonight's tea was pie and beans, and although hunger may fuel my imagination (it looked a powerful-sized meal), I don't exaggerate: the beans were nearly falling off the plate. If I said this all the time to the lads, they would worry about me, but I'm all right.

It was inviting (I'm human too) and I was glad to see it leave the cell. Never would I have touched it, but it was a starving nuisance. Ha! My God, if it had have attacked, I'd have fled.

I was going to write about a few things I had in my head but they'll wait. I am looking forward to the brief company of all the lads at Mass tomorrow. You never know when it could be the last time that you may ever see them again.

I smoked some cigarettes today. We still defeat them in this sphere. If the Screws only knew the half of it; the ingenuity of the POW is something amazing. The worse the situation the greater the ingenuity. Someday it may all be revealed.

On a personal note, Liam Og (the pseudonym for Bobby Sands')

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But it didn't really matter, we weren't asleep.

I heard a bird and yet didn't see the dawn
of day,

Would that I were deep in the earth.

Where are my thoughts of days gone by,

And where is the life I once thought was
in the world.

My cry is unheard and my tears flowing
unseen.

**When our day comes I shall repay them
dearly.**

I sing this to the tune Siun Níacute;cut; Dhuibit.

Bhíiacute; na heiníiacute;níiacute; ag ceiliúiacute;racht
inniúiacute;. Chaith ceann de na buachaillíiacute; aráiacute;n
amach as an fhuinneog, ar a leghad bhíiacute; duine éiacute;igin ag
ithe. Uaigneach abhíiacute; méiacute; ar feadh tamaill ar
tráiacute;thnóiacute;na beag inniúiacute; ag éiacute;isteacht leis
na préiacute;acháiacute;in ag screadáiacute;il agus ag teacht
abhaile daobhtha. Dáiacute;gcluinfinn an fhuiseog áiacute;lainn,
brisfeadh síiacute;mo chroíiacute;.

Anois mar a scríobhaim tús; an corciorthar ag caoineadh
mar a tháinig ann siad tharam. Is maith liom na
heintí níos mó;

Bhuel caithfidh méacute; a dul mar máacute; scríacute;obhain
níacute;os móacute; ar na heiníacute;níacute; seo beidh mo
dheora ag rith 's rachaidh mo smaointi ar ais chuig, an t-am nuair
abhsíacute;méacute; gáacute;nach, b'iad na laennta agus
iad imithe go deo anois, ach thaitin siad liom agus ar a laghad
níacute;dearmad deáacute;nta agam orthu, ta siad i mo
throíacute; --- oíacute;che mhaith anois.

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am even having pleasant dreams and so far no headaches. Is that a tribute to my psychological frame of mind or will I pay for that tomorrow or later! I wonder how long I will be able to keep these scribbles going?

My friend Jennifer got twenty years. I am greatly distressed. (Twenty-one-year-old Jennifer McCann, from Belfast's Twinbrook estate, was sentenced to twenty years' imprisonment for shooting at an RUC man).

I have no doubts or regrets about what I am doing for I know what I have faced for eight years, and in particular for the last four and-a-half years, others will face, young lads and girls still at school, or young Gerard or Kevin (Bobby's son and nephew, respectively) and thousands of others.

They will not criminalise us, rob us of our true identity, steal our individualism, depoliticise us, churn us out as systemised, institutionalised, decent law-abiding robots. Never will they label our liberation struggle as criminal.

I am (even after all the torture) amazed at British logic. Never in eight centuries have they succeeded in breaking the spirit of one man who refused to be broken. They have not dispirited, conquered, nor demoralised my people, nor will they ever.

I may be a sinner, but I stand and if it so be, will die happy knowing that I do not have to answer for what these people have done to our ancient nation.

Thomas Clarke is in my thoughts, and MacSwiney, Stagg, Gaughan, Thomas Ashe, McCaughey. Dear God, we have so many that another name to those knaves means nothing, or so they say, for some day they'll pay.

When I am thinking of Clarke, I thought of the time I spent in 'B' wing in Crumlin Road jail in September and October '77. I realised just what was facing me then. I've no need to record it all, some of my comrades experienced it too, so they know I have been thinking that some people (maybe many people) blame me for this hunger-strike, but I have tried everything possible to avert it short of surrender.

I pity those who say that, because they do not know the British and I feel more the pity for them because they don't even know their poor selves. But didn't we have people like that who sought to accuse Tone.

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Emmet, Pearse, Connolly, Mellowes: that unfortunate attitude is perennial also...

I can hear the curlew passing overhead. Such a lonely cell, such a lonely struggle. But, my friend, this road is well trod and he, whoever he was, who first passed this way, deserves the salute of the nation. I am but a mere follower and I must say O'Connell; Mhaith.

Saturday 7th

I received a most welcome note tonight from Bernie, my sister. old Bernie. I love her and think she's the greatest.

I am now convinced that the authorities intend to implement strict isolation soon, as I am having trouble in seeing my solicitor. I hope I'm wrong about the isolation, but we'll see.

It's only that I'd like to remain with the boys for as long as possible for many reasons. If I'm isolated, I will simply conquer it.

A priest was in today, somewhat pleasant, and told me about Brendan O'Connell's article in The Irish Times during the week, which I saw. We had a bit of discussion on certain points, which, of course, were to him contentious. He was cordial in his own practised way, purely tactical, of course, and at the same time he was most likely boiling over inside, thinking of the reference to this week's AP/RN (February 28th issue) calling him a collaborating middle-class nationalist, or appropriate words to that effect.

He is too, says I, and I sympathise with those unfortunate sons of God who find themselves battling against the poverty, disease, corruption, death and inhumanities of the missions...

I am 61 kgs today, going down. I'm not troubled by hunger pangs, nor paranoid about anything pertaining to food, but, by God, the food has improved here. I thought I noticed that during the last hunger-strike. Well, there is a lot at stake here.

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rean seo go deo.

D'oscail an doras 's n'oscail
druideadh 's n'oscail; go ci'noscail;in,

Ach ba chuma ar bith mar nach raibhean
mar in'noscail; r suan.

Chuala m'oscail; 's n'oscail; an 's ni
fhaca m'oscail; geal an lae,

Is mian m'oscail; r liom go raibh me go
doimhin foai,

Ca bhfuil mo smaointi ar laethe a
chuaigh romhainn,

S c'oscail; bhfuil an tsaoil a smaoin
m'oscail; abh'oscail; sa domhainn,

Ni chluintear mo bh'oscail; ic, 's
n'oscail; fheictear mar a rith mo dheor,

Nuair a thigean ar l'oscail;
aith'oscail; o'faidh m'oscail; iad go
mor.

Canaim 's n'oscail; sin leis an phort Siun
N'oscail; Dhuibhir.

Translated this reads as follows:

I arose this morning as the Screw came,

He thumped my door heavily without
speaking,

I stared at the walls, and thought I was
dead,

It seems that this hell will never depart.

The door opened and it wasn't closed

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I was not so tired today, but my back gets sore now and again sitting in the bed. I didn't get the <i>Irish News, which makes me think there is probably something in it that they don't wish me to see, but who cares. Fr Murphy was in tonight for a few minutes.

The Screws had a quick look around my cell today when I was out getting water. They are always snooping. I heard reports of men beaten up during a wing shift ...

Nothing changes here.

Sean McKenna (the former hunger-striker) is back in H-4, apparently still a bit shaky but alive and still recovering, and hopefully he will do so to the full.

I awoke with the sparrows this morning and the only thought in my head was: here comes another day, Bobby reminding me of a song I once wrote a long time ago.

This is it anyway:

Mhúscail méleis an
gealbúin ar maidin agus an t-
aon smaointe amhúin i mo
cheann - seo chugat lúeile a
Roibeard. Cuirann úsin amhran
a scrúobh mé; bhfad
úshin i ndúil domsa.

Seo úcib éar bith.

D' úirigh méar maidin
mar a thúinig an
coimheúdúir,

Bhuail súmo dhoras go trom's
gan labhairt.

Dhearc méar na ballai, 'S
shúin méach nach raibh
mébeo,

Tchútear nach n-imeoidh an t-iff-

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I got the <i>Irish News today, but there's nothing in it, that's why I got it.

I'm looking forward to seeing the comrades at Mass tomorrow, all the younger looking faces, minus the beards, moustaches, long rambling untamed hair matted in thick clumps.

One thing is sure, that awful stage, of the piercing or glazed eyes, the tell-tale sign of the rigours of torture, won't be gone - if it is ever removed. I wonder is it even conceivable that it could be erased from the mind?

We got a new comrade during the week. Isn't it inspiring the comrades who keep joining us? I read what Jennifer McCann said in court. (On being sentenced, Jennifer McCann said: 'I am a Republican prisoner of war and at the moment my comrade Bobby Sands is on hunger-strike to defend my rights as a political prisoner.'). I was touched and proud, she is my comrade.

I've been thinking of Mary Doyle and Ellen McGuigan and all the rest of the girls in Armagh. How can I forget them?

The Screws are staring at me perplexed. Many of them hope (if their eyes tell the truth) that I will die. If need be, I'll oblige them, but my God they are fools. Oscar Wilde did not do justice to them for I believe they are lower than even he thought. And I may add there is only one thing lower than a Screw and that is a Governor. And in my experience the higher one goes up that disgusting ladder they call rank, or position, the lower one gets...

It's raining. I'm not cold, my spirits are well, and I'm still getting some smokes decadence, well sort of, but who's perfect. Bad for your health. Mar dheas anois, Oíche Mhaith.

Sunday 8th

In a few hours time I shall be twenty-seven grand years of age. Paradoxically it will be a happy enough birthday; perhaps that's because I am free in spirit. I can offer no other reason.

I was at Mass today, and saw all the lads minus their beards, etc. An American priest said Mass and I went to Communion. One of the lads collapsed before Mass, but he's all right now. Another was taken out to

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Musgrave military hospital. These are regular occurrences.

I am 60.8 kgs today, and have no medical complaints.

I received another note from my sister Bernie and her boyfriend. It does my heart good to hear from her. I got the

Irish News today, which carried some adverts in support of the hunger-strike.

There is a stand-by doctor who examined me at the weekend, a young man whose name I did not know up until now. Little friendly Dr Ross has been the doctor. He was also the doctor during the last hunger-strike.

Dr Emerson is, they say, down with the 'flu... Dr Ross, although friendly, is in my opinion also an examiner of people's minds. Which reminds me, they haven't asked me to see a psychiatrist yet. No doubt they will yet, but I won't see him for I am mentally stable, probably more so than he.

I read some wild-life articles in various papers, which indeed brought back memories of the once-upon-a-time budding ornithologist! It was a bright pleasant afternoon today and it is a calm evening. It is surprising what even the confined eyes and ears can discover.

I am awaiting the lark, for spring is all but upon us. How I listened to that lark when I was in H-5, and watched a pair of chaffinches which arrived in February. Now lying on what indeed is my death bed, I still listen even to the black crows.

Monday 9th

I have left this rather late tonight and it is cold. The priest Fr Murphy was in. I had a discussion with him on the situation. He said he enjoyed our talk and was somewhat enlightened, when he was leaving.

On the subject of priests, I received a small note from a Fr S. C. from Tralee, Kerry, and some holy pictures of Our Lady. The thought touched me. If it is the same man, I recall him giving a lecture to us in Cage 11 some years ago on the right to lift arms in defence of the freedom of one's occupied and oppressed nation. Preaching to the converted he was, but it all helps.

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ever be with comrades like those around me, in Armagh and outside.

I've been thinking of the comrades in Portlaoise, the visiting facilities there are inhuman. No doubt that hell-hole will also eventually explode in due time. I hope not, but Haughey's compassion for the prisoners down there is no different from that of the Brits towards prisoners in the North and in English gaols.

I have come to understand, and with each passing day I understand increasingly more and in the most sad way, that awful fate and torture endured to the very bitter end by Frank Stagg and Michael Gaughan. Perhaps, — indeed yes! I am more fortunate because those poor comrades were without comrades or a friendly face. They had not even the final consolation of dying in their own land. Irishmen alone and at the unmerciful ugly hands of a vindictive heartless enemy. Dear God, but I am so lucky in comparison.

I have poems in my mind, mediocre no doubt, poems of hunger strike and MacSwiney, and everything that this hunger-strike has stirred up in my heart and in my mind, but the weariness is slowly creeping in, and my heart is willing but my body wants to be lazy, so I have decided to mass all my energy and thoughts into consolidating my resistance.

That is most important. Nothing else seems to matter except that lingering constant reminding thought, 'Never give up'. No matter how bad, how black, how painful, how heart-breaking, 'Never give up', 'Never despair', 'Never lose hope'. Let them bastards laugh at you all they want, let them grin and jibe, allow them to persist in their humiliation, brutality, deprivations, vindictiveness, petty harassments, let them laugh now, because all of that is no longer important or worth a response.

I am making my last response to the whole vicious inhuman atrocity they call H-Block. But, unlike their laughs and jibes, our laughter will be the joy of victory and the joy of the people, our revenge will be the liberation of all and the final defeat of the oppressors of our aged nation.

Friday 13th

I'm not superstitious, and it was an uneventful day today. I feel all right, and my weight is 58.5 kgs.

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places through the world, it could indeed be said to be the same if not worse both North and South. Indeed, one thing has not changed, that is the economic, cultural and physical oppression of the same Irish people...

Even should there not be 100,000 unemployed in the North, their pitance of a wage would look shame in the company of those whose wage and profit is enormous, the privileged and capitalist class who sleep upon the people's wounds, and sweat, and toils.

Total equality and fraternity cannot and never will be gained whilst these parasites dominate and rule the lives of a nation. There is no equality in a society that stands upon the economic and political bog if only the strongest make it good or survive. Compare the lives, comforts, habits, wealth of all those political comen (who allegedly are concerned for us, the people) with that of the wretchedly deprived and oppressed.

Compare it in any decade in history, compare it tomorrow, in the future, and it will mock you. Yet our perennial blindness continues. There are no luxuries in the H-Blocks. But there is true concern for the Irish people.

Thursday 12th

Fr Toner was in tonight, and brought me in some religious magazines.

My weight is 58.75 kgs. They did not take a blood sample because they want to incorporate other tests with it. So the doctor says they'll do it next week.

Physically I have felt very tired today, between dinner time and later afternoon. I know I'm getting physically weaker. It is only to be expected. But I'm okay. I'm still getting the papers all right, but there's nothing heartening in them. But again I expect that also and therefore I must depend entirely upon my own heart and resolve, which I will do.

I received three notes from the comrades in Armagh, God bless them again.

I heard of today's announcement that Frank Hughes will be joining me on hunger-strike on Sunday. I have the greatest respect, admiration and confidence in Frank and I know that I am not alone. How could I

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It is my birthday and the boys are having a sing-song for me, bless their hearts. I braved it to the door, at their request, to make a bit of a speech, for what it was worth. I wrote to several friends today including Bernie and my mother. I feel all right and my weight is 60 kgs.

I always keep thinking of James Connolly, and the great calm and dignity that he showed right to his very end, his courage and resolve. Perhaps I am biased, because there have been thousands like him but Connolly has always been the man that I looked up to.

I always have tremendous feeling for Liam Mellows as well; and for the present leadership of the Republican Movement, and a confidence in them that they will always remain undaunted and unchanged. And again, dare I forget the Irish people of today, and the risen people of the past, they too hold a special place in my heart.

Well, I have gotten by twenty-seven years, so that is something. I may die, but the Republic of 1916 will never die. Onward to the Republic and liberation of our people.

Tuesday 10th It has been a fairly normal day in my present circumstances. My weight is 59.3 kgs. and I have no medical problems. I have seen some birthday greetings from relatives and friends in yesterday's paper which I got today. Also I received a bag of toiletries today.

There is no priest in tonight, but the chief medical officer dropped in, took my pulse, and left. I suppose that makes him feel pretty important.

From what I have read in the newspapers I am becoming increasingly worried and wary of the fact that there could quite well be an attempt at a later date to pull the carpet from under our feet and undermine us if not defeat this hunger-strike with the concession bid in the form of 'our own clothes as a right'.

This, of course, would solve nothing. But if allowed birth could, with the voice of the Catholic hierarchy, seriously damage our position. It is my opinion that under no circumstances do they wish to see the prisoners gain political status, or facilities that resemble, or afford us with the contents of, political status.

The reasons for this are many and varied, primarily motivated by the wish to see the revolutionary struggle of the people brought to an end. The criminalisation of Republican prisoners would help to furnish this

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end.

It is the declared wish of these people to see humane and better conditions in these Blocks. But the issue at stake is not 'humanitarian', nor about better or improved living conditions. It is purely political and only a political solution will solve it. This in no way makes us prisoners elite nor do we (nor have we at any time) purport to be elite.

We wish to be treated 'not as ordinary prisoners' for we are not criminals. We admit no crime unless, that is, the love of one's people and country is a crime.

Would Englishmen allow Germans to occupy their nation or Frenchmen allow Dutchmen to do likewise? We Republican prisoners understand better than anyone the plight of all prisoners who are deprived of their liberty. We do not deny ordinary prisoners the benefit of anything that we gain that may improve and make easier their plight. Indeed, in the past, all prisoners have gained from the resistance of Republican jail struggles.

I recall the Fenians and Tom Clarke, who indeed were most instrumental in highlighting by their unflinching resistance the 'terrible silent system' in the Victorian period in English prisons. In every decade there has been ample evidence of such gains to all prisoners due to Republican prisoners' resistance.

Unfortunately, the years, the decades, and centuries, have not seen an end to Republican resistance in English hell-holes, because the struggle in the prisons goes hand-in-hand with the continuous freedom struggle in Ireland. Many Irishmen have given their lives in pursuit of this freedom and I know that more will, myself included, until such times as that freedom is achieved.

I am still awaiting some sort of move from my cell to an empty wing and total isolation. The last strikers were ten days in the wings with the boys, before they were moved. But then they were on the no-wash protest and in filthy cells. My cell is far from clean but tolerable. The water is always cold. I can't risk the chance of cold or 'flu. It is six days since I've had a bath, perhaps longer. No matter.

Tomorrow is the eleventh day and there is a long way to go. Someone should write a poem of the tribulations of a hunger-striker. I would like to, but how could I finish it.

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Caitídh m'Éacaire; a dul mar tSáacaire; tuirseach ag eirSiacaire; orna.

(Translated, this reads as follows):
Must go as I'm getting tired.

Wednesday 11th

I received a large amount of birthday cards today. Some from people I do not know. In particular a Mass bouquet with fifty Masses on it from Mrs Burns from Sevastopol Street. We all know of her, she never forgets us and we shan't forget her, bless her dear heart.

I also received a card from reporter Brendan O Cathaoir, which indeed was thoughtful. I received a letter from a friend, and from a student in America whom I don't know, but again it's good to know that people are thinking of you. There were some smuggled letters as well from my friends and comrades.

I am the same weight today and have no complaints medically. Now and again I am struck by the natural desire to eat but the desire to see an end to my comrades' plight and the liberation of my people is overwhelmingly greater.

The doctor will be taking a blood test tomorrow. It seems that Dr Ross has disappeared and Dr Emerson is back...

Again, there has been nothing outstanding today except that I took a bath this morning. I have also been thinking of my family and hoping that they are not suffering too much.

I was trying to piece together a quote from James Connolly today which I'm ashamed that I did not succeed in doing but I'll paraphrase the meagre few lines I can remember.

They go something like this: a man who is bubbling over with enthusiasm (or patriotism) for his country, who walks through the streets among his people, their degradation, poverty, and suffering, and who (for want of the right words) does nothing, is, in my mind, a fraud; for Ireland distinct from its people is but a mass of chemical elements.

Perhaps the stark poverty of Dublin in 1913 does not exist today, but then again, in modern day comparison to living standards in other

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